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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 KINSHASA 001380

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TAGS: PHUM CG PGOV PREL MONUC

SUBJECT: N. KIVU MILITARY/POLITICAL SITUATION

REF: A. KINSHASA 1117 B. KINSHASA 1376 AND 1377

Classified By: Poloff Meghan Moore for Reasons 1.5 B and D

11. (C) Summary: Poloff, DATT and British DATT visited Kisangani and Goma July 19-22 to meet with N. Kivu governor Serufuli, N. Kivu Regional Military Commander Obedi, and MONUC elements. Obedi no longer appears loyal to the transition government, and Serufuli's loyalties are opaque. MONUC Goma miloff morale was poor. In recent weeks, MONUC Kinshasa has done a poor job separating the important rumors from the junk. End Summary.

Kisangani

12. (C) On July 19, MONUC miloffs briefed on the current situation, operations, and challenges in Orientale (septels DAO). Ex-ANC (military wing of the RCD/G) Deputy Military Commander said that he had worked with Nkunda in the past and that Nkunda was professional and competent, but not a charismatic leader and was supported by someone else. He added that Nkunda was loyal to principles and if he had made an agreement with someone, he would 'go to the end.' Local human rights group Groupe Lotus told poloff that human rights in Kisangani had improved, but civilians outside the city were still subject to abuses by soldiers. For example, ex-ANC soldiers man numerous checkpoints along the Congo River, collecting taxes from travelers, and stealing merchandise and personal belongings from those who cannot pay. Groupe Lotus estimates that a traveler from Kisangani to Ubundu (about 60 miles) pays 2000FC (\$5) and goes through 10 checkpoints.

Brigadier General Obedi

13. (C) N. Kivu Regional Military Commander Obedi disingenuously presented himself as an apolitical team player who could be counted on to respond to his Kinshasa-based military hierarchy. He said he was firmly with the transition government, would execute orders from his military hierarchy-- including to arrest Nkunda if he entered Goma-- and would attack any elements who attempted to enter his province. He qualified these statements by saying he could not guarantee his troops would follow him, does not receive regular military instructions from Kinshasa, the Nkunda affair is really about military integration, and there are serious reports that 107 Rwandaphones have been killed by troops loyal to FARDC S. Kivu Commander Mabe outside Kalehe. (Comment: His actions do not support his claims. He failed to attend a mid-July Kinshasa meeting of eastern military commanders, his brother-in-law Nkunda continues to move freely in N. Kivu, and Nkunda used large numbers of ex-ANC (RCD/G military wing) N. Kivu troops during his June occupation of Bukavu (Ref A). Obedi's claim that his older brother's death prevented his attendance at the mid-July Kinshasa meeting is dubious at best. End comment). MONUC and DATT report that the FARDC is likely to declare Obedi a rebel commander in the next few days.

Governor Serufuli

14. (C) N. Kivu Governor Serufuli also appears to be trying to keep his options open. On the one hand, he raised RCD/G standard complaints that the transition government's failure to adequately address the legitimate concerns of ex-ANC officers has contributed to the current crisis, raised questions about alleged massacres of Rwandaphones by FARDC troops and suggested poloff meet with dissident RCD/G parliamentarians. He said he has not negotiated between Kabila and Nkunda because it is a military problem and he is busy working on political issues. On the other hand, he has agreed to work with MONUC to repatriate Rwandan Hutu (FDLR) elements, and said that Nkunda has two choices-- arrest or exile. Serufuli said he favors exile, although he thinks it is unlikely that Nkunda will be able to find a country of refuge.

Poor MONUC Goma Morale

15. (C) On July 21, MONUC miloffs briefed on the current situation, operations, and challenges (septels DAO) in N. Kivu. MONUC Goma miloff and poloff morale was poor. Miloffs were pessimistic about the future of the transition,

elections, and MONUC's revised mandate. MONUC poloff and miloffs complained about Kinshasa/field relations and said that oftentimes MONUC-Kinshasa believes 'unfounded rumors' rather than its staff in the field. On June 21, the Indian Aviation Contingent flew 4 sorties at a cost of \$50,000 to chase down unfounded rumors of 10,000 troops marching on Bukavu-- despite US, UK and MONUC field offices reports that there were no significant troop movements along the Goma-Bukavu road, and indeed the Indian Aviation Contingent reported no unusual activity along the road. On June 22, Emb team conducted a low-level flight over the area of Kalehe and saw no unusual activity, concentrations of people, vehicles, boats, or evidence of burned-out buildings.

Comment

16. (C) By accident or design, Obedi apparently has become yet another ex-ANC dissident commander. As a result, any FARDC eastern DRC offensive will probably target Nkunda in northern S. Kivu and Obedi in Goma. Serufuli, however, remains a wildcard who is motivated by self-interest and the desire to maintain his regional power base. He is a shrewd, calculating actor who is unlikely to commit firmly to either camp until he knows who will win. Although MONUC field offices consistently report that Kinshasa does not understand dynamics on the ground and changes their messages before sending them to New York, assertions that HQ does not trust field reporting is a further troubling development. In recent weeks, MONUC-Kinshasa has done a poor job of separating the important rumors to be verified from the junk. Chasing 10,000 ghost soldiers from Bukavu to Goma was a waste of \$50,000 and valuable flight hours. Timely verification of whether FARDC S. Kivu Commander Mabe's troops have killed up to 100 Rwandaphone civilians outside Kalehe would have been a better use of MONUC's resources.

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